

Arocena claims double-cross

NEW YORK (UPI) — Defense lawyers say a city detective double-crossed Eduardo Arocena, on trial for allegedly masterminding the terrorist activities of Omega 7, by taking an improper confession from him.

Arocena, 41, a former New Jersey dockworker, is the reputed head of Omega 7, an anti-Castro group of Cuban exiles that has claimed responsibility for at least two murders and 30 bombings in New York and Miami.

Arocena is charged with 26 counts, including first-degree murder of a Cuban diplomat, attempted murder of the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, conspiracy, racketeering and perjury.

The charge of first-degree murder of a diplomat carries a mandatory life sentence.

Attorney Humberto Aguilar, who represents the Cuban-born defendant, cross-examined New

York City Detective Robert Brandt in U.S. District Court in Manhattan Wednesday in the second week of the trial.

Brandt had testified a day earlier he and his partner, an FBI agent, met Arocena in September 1982 when Arocena was under suspicion as a member of Omega 7 but was not charged with any wrongdoing.

At one of the meetings, Brandt testified Arocena admitted he was the infamous "Omar" — the codename for the commander-in-chief of Omega 7.

Aguilar asked Brandt if he or the FBI agent had threatened Arocena into making alleged admissions.

"There were no threats made," Brandt said.

The detective said Arocena voluntarily initiated the conversations with the FBI: Arocena agreed to cooperate with the FBI's investigation into Omega 7, Brandt said, because Arocena wanted to root out renegade members of the terrorist group.

The defense lawyer asked Brandt whether Arocena had imposed any "ground rules" on the conversations. Brandt nodded and said Arocena had barred the detective and his partner from taking notes or taping a conversation. Moreover, Arocena told them they could not use what he said as the basis for a confession, the detective said.

"We had an agreement with Mr. Arocena," Brandt testified.

"You broke it," Aguilar shouted. He pointed out the FBI agent did take notes.

"I don't think he broke it," Brandt responded. "He bent the rules a little bit."

The FBI contends the notes of the conversation are a confession by Arocena. At the trial and at pre-trial hearings, Arocena and his lawyers have maintained he never made a confession.

Arocena, a fugitive for seven months, was arrested in July 1982 in Miami's "Little Havana."